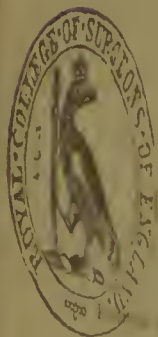




NOTES OF EXPERIENCE

EGYPT.

W. H. FLOWER



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# NOTES OF EXPERIENCES

IN

## EGYPT.

BY

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## NOTES OF EXPERIENCES IN EGYPT.

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### I.—THE JOURNEY.

WHILE it is the law with many species of animals to be stationary in one locality throughout their lives, or at least to make no regular movements in accordance with the changes of season, a large number belonging to many different classes avail themselves of their powers of locomotion to pass periodically from one region of the earth's surface to another, and thereby to save themselves from the extreme variations of external conditions to which the more stationary forms are exposed.

It is the privilege of man to be able, partly by his natural constitution, but greatly by the aid of the well-known means and appliances which his superior intellect teaches him to use, to be able to pass his life with almost equal efficiency under great extremes and variations of climatal conditions. But a further privilege, which has only become practically available to any great extent within the last few years, is that of being also able to imitate the regular movements of the migratory creatures, and to enjoy at all times of the year the advantages of the climate which suits him best, without any of the serious dislocation of occupations and social relations as must have been occasioned in past centuries.

The habits of a considerable portion of the population will doubtless gradually change with the wonderfully increasing facilities for traveling. Regular seasonal migrations will become more and more the rule. As health will be in a large number of cases the mainspring of these migrations, temporary change of climate, of habits of life, or diet and general surroundings, forming most important additions to our hygienic resources, they are subjects well befitting the attention of the medical profession. They are such potent influences for good or ill,

according as they are judiciously applied, that the responsibility is very great in recommending their trial. Leaving home for an entire winter often involves such large considerations, the breaking up of family life, interruption of duties, business sacrifices either temporary or perhaps permanent, and great expenses, that in many cases it cannot be advised lightly; and in all cases the most favourable circumstances as to locality and mode of life suitable for the particular condition of the patient must be sought for.

Knowing the difficulties in deciding upon the advisability of a change of residence, and in the choice of a suitable place, especially as from the very nature of their avocations most practising medical men can have little or no personal knowledge to guide them, I venture to offer these slight remarks, derived from recent experience of a winter migration to a sunny land.

It is not my intention to give a scientific account of the diseases prevalent in Egypt, or of the remedial effects of the climate on ailments contracted in other lands; neither my professional knowledge nor my limited opportunities would enable me to do so, and they are well described in several special works.\* Nor do I propose to trespass upon the field of the descriptive traveller, or of the regular guide-book, but merely to supply some information, derived from personal experience, upon certain points of practical interest to those who either think of going themselves, or are advising others to do so; such as the method of reaching the country, and the mode of life, accommodation, and resources for invalids and their companions when there. Such subjects must enter largely into consideration when deciding upon going; and hints upon them may tend to increase the comfort and advantage of a stay in the country, more especially as in many respects Egyptian life and travel are at present something different from those of any part of Europe. It must, moreover, be particularly understood that my remarks on many subjects only apply to the present time. Probably no country in the world (unless it be Japan) is undergoing such rapid changes as Egypt, under the restless activity of the present despotic ruler. Hence works on Egyptian travel of a very few years ago are as entirely obsolete as regards information on other points than the physical characters of the country and the grand historic monuments, as those written now will probably be in a very short time to come.

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\* See Scoresby-Jackson's *Medical Climatology*; and the special works of Schnepf, Primer, Godard, Dalrymple, Patterson, Dunbar Walker, and Dr. Grant's notices in Murray's *Handbook of Egypt*.

I need hardly say that the only time of the year when an Englishman would think of visiting Egypt for the sake of health would be the winter months, from the middle of November to the beginning of April. During this period the climate, as will be more particularly described further on, is admitted on all hands to be the finest in the world. Doubtless there are many Europeans who do live all the year through at Alexandria, and even Cairo, with perfect impunity ; but few, unless compelled by business or necessity, would choose to do so.

It being then in contemplation to spend part or all of the winter in Egypt, the first question which will naturally be asked is, how to get there.

Notwithstanding all the recent improvements in the means of communication, the distance will be to many a serious obstacle to undertaking the journey. On the other hand, to some to whom travelling is in itself a pleasure and a refreshment, it will be an additional inducement, more especially as the most direct route lies through that paradise of travellers—Italy. A perfectly straight line drawn on a map between London and Alexandria, will be seen to pass through the whole of the Italian peninsula from north to south ; and, by taking this way, the sea-voyage is reduced to its shortest. There are two ports near the south of Italy from which there is regular steam communication with Egypt ; Brindisi, the nearest, being only three days' voyage, and Naples, one day longer. The easiest way to reach these ports from England is through Paris, Macon, the Mont Cenis Tunnel, Turin, and Bologna, thence direct to Brindisi ; or by Florence and Rome to Naples. I would recommend the former route for going out, and the latter for returning.

To those to whom it is not a great object to avoid every unnecessary day on board ship, there are other routes. 1. The Peninsular and Oriental boats, which call at Brindisi on Monday, start the Friday before from Venice. As they take passengers for the same fare from either port, this route effects a considerable saving in expense, and avoids a long railway journey. Its comparative advantage depends upon the weather to be met with in the Adriatic, which unfortunately cannot be ascertained beforehand. We went this way, and repented having done so, neither my wife nor I happening to enjoy life on board-ship in such rough weather as was encountered in the voyage last November. 2. The French Messagerie boats which call at Naples, sail from Marseilles, thus greatly shortening the railway, and proportionately increasing the sea part of the journey (to about a week), but, on the whole, it



is a tolerably direct route from London. 3. Then there are Italian boats from Genoa, and Austrian boats from Trieste; and, lastly, is the long sea-voyage of thirteen days by Peninsular and Oriental boats from Southampton to Alexandria,\* by way of the Bay of Biscay, Gibraltar, and Malta, which by many is recommended in preference to all the others, as avoiding the trouble and fatigue of frequent changes, railway travelling, the constant packing and unpacking, difficulties at custom-houses, and the chance of bad accommodation and unwholesome living at hotels.†

A sea-voyage, varying in length, according to the route chosen, from three to thirteen days, is then necessary in order to arrive in Egypt; and this leads me to say a few words on voyages in general, especially as applied to invalids in search of health. For a medical man, in recommending a patient to take a voyage, should have a thorough knowledge of what is often really entailed by his advice. Even one's own personal experience, unless very recent, is scarcely to be trusted on such a subject, for we are most of us so happily constituted, that the remembrance of the disagreeables and troubles of travel, as of many other circumstances in life, soon passes away, and the more enjoyable portions of our experience alone remain distinctly painted on our memory.

The first question that arises, in considering for oneself or others whether a sea-voyage should be undertaken is, Are you what is commonly called a "good sailor"? In the case of one of those very fortunate individuals whose physical well-being is unaffected by the motion of a ship at sea, the question loses a large portion of its significance; but the majority are not so constituted, and suffer more or less severely from this cause. It is strange how little sympathy these sufferings seem to excite from those who do not experience them; and yet they are very real, and, in delicate persons, if long continued, may exert a very prejudicial effect upon the general

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\* During the coming season, the Southampton boats will run through the Canal to India, without calling at Alexandria. Passengers for Cairo will be landed at Port Said or Ismailia.

† Thus Dr. Dunbar Walker, after beginning by saying, "a sea-voyage, and one, perhaps, of a fortnight in length, is a journey full of evil, accompanied by all that can make life miserable to the majority of Britishers", strongly recommends this route in preference to all others; advice tantamount, one might think, to prohibiting the journey to Egypt altogether. It should be remembered that the above mentioned drawbacks to land travelling can be reduced to a minimum by a careful choice of route and of stopping-places, and especially by taking plenty of time over the journey.



health. It is hardly necessary to observe that all the hitherto proposed remedies for sea-sickness are absolutely futile.

The principal objection to persons in delicate health undertaking a long sea-voyage, is the uncertainty about the influences to which he or she may be exposed; while on land, the traveller is to a great extent his own master, and has power to control the surrounding conditions. He may regulate the day's journey, according to strength or inclination; he may linger in such places as have agreeable associations and environments, he may hasten over those that are of an opposite character. But when once embarked upon a voyage, whether he find himself crowded in a dark, close cabin, with two or three uncongenial companions, lying on a narrow hard shelf, port-holes rigidly closed, and the atmosphere he breathes poisoned by noisome odours, of which the sickening smell of the oil of the engine is one of the least objectionable; the rain pouring on deck, making escape from his prison, even for a few moments, impossible; when he feels that he would give all his worldly possessions for a breath of pure air, or a few hours' cessation from the perpetual din of the engines within and the waves without; he is perfectly helpless, he must go through it day after day and night after night, until the weather changes or the voyage is ended.

Doubtless voyages may be made under favourable circumstances; the weather may be fine, the ship not crowded, the cabin comfortable, the companions pleasant; but the risk and uncertainty of what is before him, the chance of being exposed to such depressing influences as must seriously affect the health, should make an invalid hesitate before venturing on a longer voyage than is absolutely necessary. Of one unfavourable condition, any one going out to Egypt or returning at the usual time, may be sure; that is, excessive crowding of the vessels, it being just the season of the rush of travellers to and from India and all parts of the East; and passengers who make the whole journey have naturally much greater advantages in choice of cabins and other accommodation, than those who are only picked up by the way.

Great attention is now paid to the ventilation of our hospitals, work-houses, and even the dwellings of the poorest classes, but that of our largest and best appointed passenger-ships is still in a most neglected state. Except in hot climates, below deck it is always a choice between breathing very cold or very vitiated air, and the difference of taste between different passengers on this subject, gives rise to continual disagreements. It is strange to find how the majority still generally

prefer the latter alternative. It should be known that passengers, especially delicate ladies travelling for health, who wish to spend as much time as possible on deck, must be at the trouble and expense of taking their own easy chairs with them ; though there seems no reason why the decks of first class ships, like those of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, should not be provided with iron or wooden benches made in an easy curve, like those now in general use in our parks and public gardens.

A special objection to returning by the Southampton route to most invalids, especially those suffering from pulmonary complaints, is that the time consumed in the transit from Egypt to England is too short. It is not desirable to stay longer in the former country than the beginning or middle of April, as the heat by that time often becomes great, and has a very relaxing effect on delicate constitutions ; and the almost sudden change to the intense cold of the Atlantic, and the rigours of an English May, such for instance as the last, may undo all the good that has been gained during the winter. It is, therefore, generally recommended, with reason, after leaving Egypt, to spend a few weeks either in Syria, Greece, or Italy, and so to pass gradually and insensibly between the two very similar temperatures of an Egyptian March and an English June.

## II.—ALEXANDRIA.

We arrived off Alexandria on the afternoon of Thursday, November 20th. So low is the land of the Egyptian delta, that the first visible sign of the African coast is the tall lighthouse, looking in the distance like a stick standing up in the water. It was a welcome sight, but we were soon afterwards doomed to disappointment. It was a race between the ship and the sun. If the latter sank below the horizon before we arrived at the entrance of the harbour, there was no entering that night. The ship lost by a quarter of an hour. It was blowing hard, but there was nothing for it but to turn her head to sea again, and we had to submit to another night in our close cabins, the port-holes of which had not been once opened since we left Brindisi.

Our first anxiety on arriving in Alexandria harbour on the following morning, was to find out whether we should be put into quarantine, as we knew had been the case with the passengers of several previous ships. Cholera was still reported in some parts of Italy, although all

were healthy on board ; and that evidently caused some consternation to the Egyptian officials. After some manœuvres very amusing to witness, and a quasi-medical inspection, we were let off more easily than we had anticipated. The passengers bound for India (more than two-thirds of our number) were allowed to proceed to Suez in a quarantine train, which was supposed to be isolated from the population of the land through which it travelled by a variety of curious precautions, and the remainder of us were allowed to expiate the forty-eight hours to which we were sentenced on board the comparatively empty ship in the smooth water of the harbour. Being in no particular hurry, we were really not sorry to have time to recover the effects of the previous week. Every thing goes by comparison ; and the feeling of having escaped the disagreeables of the stormy sea on the one hand, and the dreaded week or ten days in the lazaretto on the other, made our enforced sojourn in Alexandria harbour a period of rest, enjoyment, and preparation for continuing our travels by land.

The lazaretto in which passengers in quarantine are usually imprisoned is a large barrack-like building a short distance outside the town. The accounts of those who had had experience of its internal arrangements varied much ; but I gathered that, on the whole, there is not much now to complain of in the way of cleanliness, living, etc., as it is managed by the proprietor of one of the large Alexandria hotels, and on much the same principle. The great objection to being sent there would, of course, be the confinement and loss of time to those who are limited in the latter respect.

The town of Alexandria has been too often described to make it necessary for me to say anything further about it. After the world-renowned relics of antiquity, Pompey's pillar and Cleopatra's needle, the principal charms of the place to us were the beautiful gardens in the outskirts, especially that belonging to the Khedive, situated on the bank of the Mahmoodah canal. Here were seen stately palms with their rich clusters of purple and yellow dates, spreading banyan trees, brilliant poinsettias, and all the luxuriance of tropical vegetation.

Alexandria has no reputation as a health-resort. It is surrounded on the land side by marshes ; its climate in winter is variable, and often cold from the prevalence of north wind, and it is subject to violent storms of rain, which convert the streets into rivers of liquid mud.

The hotel generally esteemed the first, *i.e.*, the largest and dearest, is the Hôtel de l'Europe, situated in the great square, where also is the Hôtel de l'Orient ; but Abbât's, a little higher in the town, is now much

resorted to by English travellers, as it has the advantage of being somewhat less expensive, and is not inferior in comfort and cleanliness. English ladies going for the first time to the East must be prepared for finding no female attendants of any kind whatever in any of the hotels in the country; the waiters are Italians, Greeks, Germans, or French, the bedroom servants Arabs; so, if they be delicate and likely to require attendance in their bedrooms, they will do well to take a maid with them, though certainly many ladies accustomed to travelling and to help themselves do contrive to get on in Egypt without this often troublesome appendage.

The system of living is the same at all the hotels in Egypt; a fixed charge per day for bedroom and meals, including lights and attendance. A separate sitting-room is always an extra, and generally an expensive one. The meals included in the general charge are—breakfast, any time between seven and ten, consisting of coffee or tea, bread, butter, eggs, preserves, honey; a very ample lunch or *déjeuner à la fourchette*, at noon or half-past, consisting of a considerable variety of well-cooked dishes, followed by fruit; and an abundant *table d'hôte* dinner at half-past six. After lunch and dinner, a small cup of thick Arab coffee, or sometimes French *café noir*, is always served. Wines, beer, mineral waters, etc., are extras, and dear; the lowest price for French vin ordinaire being four shillings a bottle in all the hotels of Alexandria and Cairo. The daily charge is the same, whether one partake of the meals or not; and, according to the published tariff, meals served at irregular times or in the bedroom are charged extra, though we never found this insisted on in the case of illness. The charge at Abbât's Hotel is twelve shillings per day; at the other two, sixteen shillings, as at the large hotels at Cairo. No difference is made whether the worst or the best bedroom in the house be occupied, the choice of rooms being given to the first comers. If the visitor stay long, he can improve his quarters by watching for rooms as they become vacant. But, more on this subject when we come to Cairo.

At Alexandria, some of the historical "plagues" of Egypt will be met with in full force. Mosquitoes and fleas both abound, the former, perhaps, on the whole, the most troublesome, but that depends much upon individual constitution. There are very few, except the thoroughly acclimatised inhabitants, to whom the bite of a mosquito does not produce more or less annoyance, while many persons enjoy perfect immunity from fleas. After much experience of the vaunted "insecticides", Persian powder, pyrethrum root, camphor, etc., I have come to the

conclusion that there is very little good to be derived from them. Fleas in the East live in the dusty floors more than in the beds; the only remedy is diligently to hunt for and destroy the enemy the moment his first attack is felt, an operation which unfortunately consumes a great deal of time.

With regard to mosquitoes, in the day time one must keep a sharp look out upon the hands and face, and at night trust to curtains, without which it would be impossible to sleep anywhere in Lower Egypt. Fortunately, they are provided in all the good hotels. The interior must be thoroughly searched before retiring to bed, and all intruders expelled, at whatever sacrifice of time and trouble, and then the curtains carefully tucked in on all sides. It is often an annoying thing, when going to bed thoroughly tired from a hard day's work, to have to spend half an hour or more in hunting a little active winged wretch, which seems to have the power of rendering itself invisible the moment it appears within grasp; but to be shut up for the night in close quarters with a hungry mosquito entails worse consequences. The satisfaction of an easy, though not bloodless, victory over the gorged and lazy adversary next morning is no compensation for the number of times one has been awakened by his shrill trumpet blown as if in derision in one's ears and for half a dozen stings on the face and hands. With respect to the treatment of these stings, there is only one golden rule to be followed—do not rub them or scratch them, otherwise whatever suffering they may entail will be doubled or trebled. The usual applications of salvolatile, eau de Cologne, etc., appear to have but little real efficacy; nearly all the serious results are from stings which have been inflamed by rubbing or scratching. While on the subject of mosquitoes, it will be well to mention that, though common at Alexandria and Cairo all the year round, they are happily quite unknown on the Nile a few days' journey above the latter place, and even fleas diminish the higher the river is ascended, and in Nubia are no longer met with.

It is a good plan to have a square yard of fine white net while travelling in Egypt. It will be useful to have in bed to throw over the face in case of a mosquito surreptitiously invading the guarded precincts during the night, if one be indisposed for the more radical method of a hunt, and also for a protection against flies during an afternoon siesta.

A few miles to the east of Alexandria, is a strip of land lying along the Mediterranean coast raised above the general level of the delta, which, being formed of calcareous rocks and covered with sand, partakes of the physical characters of the desert. It is, therefore, reputed to be



superior in salubrity either to Alexandria itself, or any other part of the neighbourhood. Here, most of the European residents of Alexandria have built villas to live in during the hot season ; and there is a quiet family hotel called “*Beau Séjour*”, which must be preferable to those in the town for any visitors under the necessity of remaining long in this locality. There is a railway from Alexandria, about five miles in length, with several stations at different parts of *Ramlé*,\* as this suburb is called. The station at Alexandria is close to Cleopatra’s needle, and at the opposite end of the town from the main station for Cairo and Suez.

### III.—CAIRO.

Cairo, the capital of Egypt, is one hundred and thirty miles from Alexandria. It is reached by railway in four-and-a-half hours by express, and in six hours by ordinary trains. Refreshments can be obtained, if necessary, at Kafr ez Zyat station, about half way. The line runs the whole distance through the delta, a low-lying, level, green, fertile, populous land, intersected by numerous canals and branches of the great river. To strangers, it is full of interest the whole way, the buildings, the people, the animals, the vegetation, the agriculture, all different from anything seen before ; and then, shortly before reaching Cairo, a distant glimpse is obtained of the stately group of pyramids of Ghizeh, which, the more they are studied and compared with other and later works of man, the more are found to merit the ancient appellation of “wonders of the world”.

Not many years ago, Masr el Kahirah (Masr the Victorious) of the Arabs, Le Caire of the French, Grand Cairo of early English travellers was in every aspect one of the most picturesque and oriental of cities. Owing to its vast size and the natural conservatism of the worshippers of Islam, great portions of the city still retain their ancient character, and it is still possible to lose oneself in mazes of narrow crooked streets where no vestige can be seen of any alteration in manner, custom, or appearance of the inhabitants or their dwellings since the golden days of Haroun Al’Raschid. But other parts of the city, especially those which are first seen by the traveller arriving at the station and driving to one of the principal hotels, savour more of modern France or Italy

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\* Arabic for “sand”.



than of the Arabian Nights. Here we meet with wide well watered boulevards, shaded with straight rows of acacia trees, and lighted with gas, bordered with detached villas in neatly kept gardens; handsome colonnaded streets with shops that might vie with those of the Palais Royal, an Italian opera-house, and a French theatre, a public garden with a military band playing every afternoon all the popular European airs, gay open carriages driving about everywhere, electric telegraph wires crossing the streets in all directions, and a new post-office such as few European capitals can boast. And yet, among and below all these superficial signs of modern civilisation, the masses of the people remain much as of old, and a moment's glance at the crowd which throng every street of this active, bustling, lively place, the veiled women, the white turbans and red tarbooshes, the flowing blue galabiahs, the camels, and the donkeys convince one that in crossing the Mediterranean one has really entered into a new quarter of the world. But I must not wander into subjects already fully and graphically described by other writers, but keep to my humble intention of giving some plain useful hints that may add to the comfort of the invalid traveller.

An Englishman arriving at Cairo will be pretty sure to go to one or the other of three hotels, Shepheard's, the New Hotel, or the Hôtel du Nil; and he should make up his mind which it is to be beforehand, and at once put himself and baggage in charge of the commissionaire, who will be in waiting at the station. At no railway station in the world is the scramble of volunteer porters to get hold of the newly arrived passengers and their baggage more vigorous and vociferous than at Cairo. During the full season, it is best to write or telegraph from Alexandria to secure the rooms required.

The old-established Shepheard's (now Zech's) is still the favourite with our countrymen. It is a large, plain, two-storied, quadrilateral building, with a garden in the interior, and also on one side. It faces what was formerly part of the Esbekeeyah or public square; but a colonnaded row of stone houses is being built immediately opposite the hotel door, which rather deteriorates from the advantages of the situation, but it is still open and airy on the sides and behind. The back rooms, which look into a large palm garden, though smaller and not so well furnished, are pleasanter for those that like quiet than the rooms in front.

The interior arrangements do not differ much from those of European hotels, except that there are no bells, which is sometimes a source of inconvenience, though a swarthy attendant is usually posted in each corridor,

who can be summoned by the oriental fashion of clapping the hands. There is nothing much to be complained of in the way of cleanliness, it being about on a par in this respect with the better class hotels of Southern Europe. The scale of living is very abundant, and though, as in other hot countries, the roast beef and mutton cannot be fairly compared with the best articles of the kind in England, there is no chance, even for the most fastidious, of being starved. I think the danger lies rather in the other direction.

The charge is sixteen shillings per day. Occasionally a slight reduction is made for those who are contemplating a long stay. Lights are included, and servants nominally, though, of course, the latter expect a small gratuity on leaving. Washing is done in the hotel fairly well, but at very high prices. For a sitting-room, about a guinea a day extra is charged. Of course, for a large party this is convenient, though not absolutely necessary; for it is a common practice, as on the continent of Europe, to sit and receive visitors in the bedroom; and there are the reading-room on the ground-floor, the garden, and the wide covered porch in front of the entrance-hall, a favourite resort with those whom idleness or ill-health restrains from more active employment. It is certainly difficult for a new-comer to resist the temptation to while away some time here, for the sake of the moving panorama of oriental life presented by the street below.

The New Hotel is a far handsomer building than Shepherd's, and better placed, being exactly opposite the centre of the recently improved Esbekeeyah garden. The interior arrangements are more modern than those of Shepherd's, the rooms being well furnished and provided with electric bells. The prices, living, etc., are exactly the same. The cooking last year was considered by connoisseurs to be better; but that, of course, may vary. The manager and all the attendants were exceedingly civil and obliging. We spent four weeks at Shepherd's, and three at the New Hotel, and found little to choose between them. The principal difference was in the company: Americans, French, and Italians mostly frequent the New, while the English keep very much to Shepherd's.

The Hôtel du Nil seems to be a great favourite with Germans, and also with many English gentlemen travelling alone. It is smaller than the others, and somewhat less expensive, but is well spoken of for comfort. The great objection to it, especially for ladies, is the situation. It is in the most crowded part of the town, and can only be approached by a very narrow alley, leading from the Mooskee, the Regent Street of

Cairo. When once reached, the hotel is pleasant and quiet enough, having a pretty garden in the centre.

There are several inferior hotels, but of them I can say nothing, not having met with anyone who has stayed at any of them. It may be possible before long for visitors who intend to remain some time at Cairo to obtain lodgings, and so live at a cheaper rate than at the hotels; but, without a knowledge of the language and customs of the people, there would be great trouble and probably discomfort in doing so, at least for invalids, and it must always be remembered that I am not now writing for the strong, hardy, and adventurous.

The drinking-water at the hotels at Cairo, being obtained from the Nile and filtered, is generally good and wholesome. This applies to Egypt generally; the large volume of water flowing down the river, being sufficient to counteract the effect of any small amount of impurity that may find its way into it. It is always kept in the native jars of porous clay or *goulas*, by the evaporation from the surface of which the temperature of the water is kept down to a refreshing point even in hot weather.

Cairo is now well supplied with European physicians. Dr. Grant (Scotch), Dr. Bull (Danish), Dr. Warren (American), and Dr. Sachs (German) are those most in repute among the visitors; while Mr. Broadway and Mr. Waller are dentists in large practice. The shops are furnished with all European articles; the postal service is frequent and regular, and telegraphic news from London and elsewhere is daily posted in Robertson's reading-room. We learnt the result of the last Oxford and Cambridge boat-race on the afternoon of the day it took place.

The objects of interest to the visitor in Cairo and its neighbourhood are so numerous, that it would take long indeed to exhaust them. The only danger is that to the delicate in body, or to those who have left their homes and occupations for the sake of mental rest, they may become too exciting, and, unless there be ample time, that too much may be attempted in the way of sight-seeing. It is a wonderful sensation to find oneself for the first time face to face, as it were, with two distinct phases of the world's history and civilisation, each absolutely unlike the other, and unlike anything previously experienced. The pyramids of Ghizeh and the obelisk of Heliopolis, on the one hand, and the mosque of Sultan Hassan and the tomb of El Barkook, on the other, and all the associations that cling round each, the history, social life, the arts of the people that belonged to these so widely separated

eras are almost overwhelming, though irresistible objects of interest ; and, if these be not sufficient, striking memorials of a third and far more remote period of the world's history are abundant in the vicinity of Cairo, and their investigation will to some prove equally attractive. The bare and sun-smitten Mokattam Hills raising their picturesque and craggy forms against the eastern sky, and the arid desert plain to the west, beyond the pyramids, teem with the remains of animals which flourished when the rocks and sand which now enclose them were mud at the bottom of a deep sea. To one fond of sketching, most charming subjects innumerable, both landscape and figure, offer themselves for the pencil. In fact, the resources of Cairo to the intelligent traveller are inexhaustible. Physical strength will be the only limit to the perpetual feast of eye and mind.

The means of locomotion are now greatly improved ; comfortable two-horse open carriages are always standing at the hotel doors, and, since the new iron bridge across the Nile has been opened, the Pyramids and nearly all the places of interest in the neighbourhood can be reached with wheels. But donkey-riding is still pre-eminently the favourite and most convenient method of getting about, both with the natives and visitors. There is no reason why one should not take exercise by walking in Cairo as well as elsewhere ; in winter, it is not often too hot ; but, when mounted on a donkey, there is such a feeling of independence, and the attendant boy is so useful as a faithful servant, guide, and interpreter, holding himself responsible for bringing one safely through all the difficulties that may be met with in exploring the out-of-the-way parts of the town often as well as or better than a regular dragoman ; and the expense is so small, that one almost infallibly soon falls into the regular system of locomotion. If one be likely to go much about in this way, it is best, having once found a donkey whose paces suit (for, of course, they vary much), and an intelligent, pleasant boy (so-called, although varying from 10 to 30 years of age), to engage them for sole use by the week. All three get along much better when they are accustomed to each other ; and, when the visitor is known to all the donkey-boys who crowd the door of the hotel to "belong to" one particular member of their fraternity, he will be spared the desperate rush that takes place at the unattached stranger the moment he ventures to set foot in the street.

The donkeys are small, but strong, fast, and willing. As they are rather apt to stumble in rough places, it is necessary to be always on the look out for a fall, which, if one be prepared for it, and have not

got the feet too far in the stirrups, seldom leads to any harm. But troublesome accidents do sometimes occur. A friend of mine, an English clergyman, received last winter a severe dislocation of the right shoulder from his donkey falling with him ; but he was attending at the time more to the architectural beauties of the street through which he was passing than to the paces of his animal.

Ladies ride as well as men. It enables them to explore many parts of the town and neighbourhood too far for walking and not easily accessible to carriages ; and as, further up the country, donkey-riding is the only means of visiting nearly all the most interesting ruins, it is well to practise the art at Cairo. Side-saddles, a few years ago, were almost unknown in Egypt, as the Turkish women never use them, and so it was advisable for ladies to take them out as part of their baggage ; but now there is no difficulty in buying or hiring them at Cairo.

The chief characteristic of the climate of Egypt is its dryness. In the richly wooded districts of the equatorial regions of Africa, where the numerous affluents of the Nile take their rise, almost continuous rain prevails ; but, in the deserts of Nubia and Upper Egypt, through which the great river flows in its course to the sea, sometimes years pass without a single shower. The absence of rain and absence of vegetation are obviously related to one another. The Mediterranean coast, as before mentioned, and the delta, are less dry than the upper parts of the country, and Cairo occupies an intermediate position.

It is the opinion of some observant residents that the climate of Lower Egypt is becoming modified, and the rainfall increased, by extended cultivation and by the alterations produced in the physical features of the country due to the formation of the Suez Canal.\* However this may be, all are agreed that last winter was quite exceptional in the amount of rain that fell ; but, as this was much the same all round the Mediterranean basin, it must have been due to something more than local causes. How much it amounted to will be seen from the following extracts from my journal, which record all the times at which rain fell during the five months we were in the country, *i.e.*, from November 21st to April 20th. November 21st : in Alexandria harbour, heavy showers of rain. November 26th : very heavy rain at Alexandria in the night and early morning, and also a slight shower on arrival at Cairo the same afternoon. December 19th : at Cairo, some rain early in the morning. December 27th : much and heavy rain and hail.

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\* See the remarks of Dr. Grant, in Murray's *Handbook*, 4th edition (1873), p. 2.



December 28th: some showers. January 11th and 12th: at Bed-reshayn, about fifteen miles south of Cairo, some slight showers of rain. January 28th: on the Nile above Rhoda, a slight shower in the middle of the day. February 3rd: at Souhag, Upper Egypt, a heavy rain nearly all night, and a close cloudy day, with occasional showers and no sun. February 4th: rain again in the night and showers in the day. March 4th: at Thebes, a very slight shower in the middle of the day.

Thus even in this exceptionally wet season, there were only eleven days, out of one hundred and fifty, on which rain fell, and on some of these it was scarcely more than a few drops.

As a general rule, the days are much like one another: fine, clear, bright, and sunny. The subject of the weather, so important to us in our island home, soon loses all interest, owing to absence of change.

Another characteristic of the Egyptian winter climate is, that, though the days are warm, even hot in the sun (usually about 70 deg. or 75 deg. in the shade), the nights are fresh and cold, and often accompanied by heavy dew, the thermometer frequently falling to 40 deg. or below, though rarely quite to the freezing point. To many constitutions, this is advantageous. A sultry night following a hot day often induces languor and depression; but the freshness of the Egyptian night and early morning is invigorating and bracing, and enables one better to bear the fatigues and heat of the day. Persons with delicate lungs find the rather sudden changes from day to night temperature somewhat trying, but any bad effects that may arise from them can always be guarded against by taking proper precautions, especially not remaining out of doors after sunset, or, if tempted to linger to watch the beautiful after-glow which often appears in the sky, always putting on extra clothing. Such persons should never set out for a drive in the afternoon without taking some wraps to put on directly the sun goes down. By carefully regulating the clothing, the injurious effects of the great alterations of temperature can always be counteracted. Fire-places are provided in the rooms of the New Hotel, though not in any of the others; it must be very seldom, however, that the necessity for a fire can be felt.

In considering Egypt from a hygienic point of view, it is extremely important to understand that, physically, the whole country is divided into two distinct regions.

1. The low-lying alluvial plain, beneath the level of the annual overflow of the Nile. Throughout the greater part of the country, this is a



narrow strip bordering the river, scarcely averaging five miles in breadth; but at the north it widens to form the delta, a triangular patch, whose apex is at Cairo, and base, about one hundred miles in width, on the Mediterranean shore. This is the cultivated and highly fertile part of the land. Its surface consists of mud on the receding of the water in the autumn, but soon dries under the influence of the sun into a rich, dark-coloured, sandy loam. It is the product of the disintegration of the primitive rocks of the mountainous districts of Abyssinia and other regions of Central Africa, where the Nile tributaries take their source.

2. All the rest of the country which is above the level of the autumnal overflow. This is the *desert*. Its line of demarcation from the cultivated land is most sharply defined. It is far from being the monotonous, level, sandy plain that we had been accustomed to associate with the name, but consists, in Lower and Middle Egypt, of limestone rocks of marine origin, rising in terraces or escarpments, one above another, from the river valley, the stratification being generally very horizontal, and ending in a high tableland, carved and scored out in various directions, evidently by long-continued action of water, into wide open valleys or narrow gorges; in the bottom of some of these, a little scanty vegetation, the curious *Anastatica*, or "Rose of Jericho", and the camelthorn, may be found growing; but generally all is absolutely barren. Yet by artificial irrigation, as in some parts in the neighbourhood of Cairo and at Ismailia, the desert can be made green and fertile.

It is a strange sensation to find oneself for the first time actually in the desert, as on the excursion, for instance, to the so-called "petrified forest" about six miles to the east of Cairó. Nothing but absolutely barren rock and stone is to be seen around in all directions, not a blade of grass or a sign of a living thing. In silence and desolation, the only previous experience to which I could compare it was the middle of an ice-field in Switzerland, when shut in by surrounding rocks from all sights and sounds of the world below. And yet there is something very invigorating, almost exhilarating, in the freedom, and especially in the air, of the desert. A refreshing breeze, in winter at least, generally tempers even the heat and glare of the midday sun, and in the morning and evening it is decidedly cold. Nowhere on land is the air so pure, as nowhere else is there such complete absence of all decomposing organic matter in the soil; it has well been compared with that of the open sea.

It should be the object of those who go to Egypt for the benefit of their health to breathe as much of the air of the desert as possible, and it is unfortunate that this cannot at present be obtained in the places of residence which afford the greatest facilities and comforts for invalids. Cairo is situated on its edge, but the hotels, and all the modern town in fact, are built on low ground, which, until reclaimed artificially, was subject to the overflow, and have the whole of the ancient city, with its crowded population and impure streets, between them and the desert. Moreover, the prevailing winds, being from the north, blow directly across the delta. This and the great amount of dust, not of the cleanest kind, which fills the air of a great city full of people and animals, form the principal drawbacks to Cairo as a residence for invalids. What is greatly wanted is a place where good accommodation and comfort, combined with moderate expense, could be obtained a few miles out of Cairo, somewhere on the Mokattam Hills.

The nearest approach to this is the establishment which has just been opened at Helwân, or "Helouan-les-Bains" (as it is called in French), about fifteen miles south of Cairo, and three from the east bank of the river. The origin of this place was a spring of warm sulphurous water, similar in composition to that of Aix-les-Bains, in Savoy. Baths were erected here a few years ago for the use of the Khedive and his family. These have lately been considerably enlarged; and Dr. Reil, a German physician, who has lived some years in Cairo, and who speaks English well, has been appointed resident director of the establishment. Two hotels or boarding-houses, though not quite completed, had just been opened when I visited the place in January last. By next season, it will all be in good working order, and several hundred visitors will be accommodated at more reasonable prices than in Cairo.

The situation was determined by the mineral spring, which wells up in the middle of a flat sandy plain, about midway between the river and the range of rocky hills that flank the Nile valley on the east. Although not so agreeable as if higher on the hill-side, it is well within the border of the desert and fairly above the river-level.

Apart from the peculiar medicinal virtues of the waters (which are especially recommended in case of chronic rheumatic, cutaneous, and hepatic diseases), a residence at Helwân would probably be better, in a sanitary point of view, than in the hotels of Cairo; the air is purer and the life quieter, but, for those who have not plenty of resources within themselves, it will scarcely offer the same attractions. At present, it is

rather difficult of access, but the road will probably be improved before next winter.

The only other places where European travellers could pass the winter in Egypt (apart from the Nile boat, to be spoken of in the next section) are Suez and Ismailia. There are hotels at both, but of neither of them can I say anything from personal knowledge. Ismailia is a new place on the side of the Suez Canal, and has some pretty gardens on land reclaimed from the desert. It is reached by rail from Cairo in about nine hours. Its attractions are pure desert air and quiet, for it is quite away from all historical objects of interest. The principal outward events in life there must be the passage of vessels through the canal.

#### IV.—THE NILE VOYAGE.

Few English who pass a winter in Egypt are content to remain the whole time at Cairo. The interest that has been awakened in the ancient history of the country must naturally make every one anxious to see the still remaining evidences of the wonderful civilisation of the Nile valley three thousand and more years ago. Almost every trace of the mighty cities built in the delta in Pharaonic times has disappeared. At Heliopolis, "the great Temple of the Sun, the high priest of which was father-in-law of Joseph, and, in later times, the teacher of Moses",\* is now represented by a solitary obelisk standing, when we saw it, in a field of sugar-cane. Of the grandeur of Memphis, a single colossal statue of Rameses II lying on its face in a pool of water is all that remains. When the population of a district continues, and new towns rise up in the place of old ones, the fragments of the earlier structures are used up in their successors. This is a far easier process than digging fresh materials from the quarries. Thus Cairo has absorbed the remains of the great towns near which it was founded. Even the Pyramids

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\* By far the most truthful, graphic, as well as poetical, descriptions of Egyptian scenery, are those by the Dean of Westminster, in the introductory chapters of his *Sinai and Palestine*, a work which no traveller in the East should be without. To obtain a knowledge of the customs of the people, ancient and modern, the standard works of Wilkinson and Lane are indispensable. Among numerous recent books, Zincke's *Egypt of the Pharaohs and the Khedive* may be mentioned as containing interesting and original sketches of the condition of the country and inhabitants; and Mariette Bey's *Itineraire*, and *Aperçu de l'Histoire d'Égypte*, which may be obtained at the Museum of Antiquities at Cairo for five francs each, will be found most useful travelling companions.

were stripped of their outer casing stones to aid in the construction of the mosques of the Arab conquerors of Egypt, though the mountainous massiveness of their solid interior fortunately resisted the attacks of the new builders.

Many of the old buildings of Upper Egypt have, happily for us, met with a better fate than their contemporaries of the lower country. When ancient Thebes fell from its high estate, no modern city took its place. The mud of the river-banks supplied all that was needed for the habitations of the dwellers of the squalid Arab villages now scattered over the vast plain once covered by the hundred-gated city. Hence there still remains an assemblage of mighty ruins, grander than can be found collected in any one spot on the earth's surface. No one going to Egypt should think of leaving it without visiting Thebes, and Thebes is only one of the many places of supreme interest met with along the banks of the Nile. Beni Hassan, Abydos, Dendera, Edfou, Esneh, Kom Ombos, Philæ, Abou Simbul, and many others, all have their tale to tell of wonder and beauty.

For visiting Upper Egypt and Nubia, none of the ordinary modes of travelling familiar to Europeans are available. There is not a single hotel, or place where board and lodging can be obtained anywhere above Cairo, except by roughing it to an extent which would not suit those for whom these notes are written. A system has, however, gradually developed itself by which all the conveniences and even luxuries of European civilisation can be enjoyed in the desert of far-off Nubia. The traveller moves on from place to place along the river in a floating-house, which he never need leave for long, as everything of interest lies within easy reach of the banks. Of all modes of travelling, this is, perhaps, the most enjoyable. With agreeable friends, a well furnished comfortable dahabeah or sailing-boat, an attentive and intelligent dragoon, a good crew, and plenty of time at disposal, it leaves nothing to be desired. One can go from Cairo to Wady Halfeh at the second cataract, about eight hundred miles, without more fatigue or trouble than if staying all the while in a house by the seaside. Occupations can be continued as one moves along without the interruptions occasioned by packing or unpacking, and all the disagreeables and uncertainties incident upon arriving at and leaving strange hotels. There are no payments of any kind to make, all being contracted for before departure. It is a perfect rest from nearly all the little cares and troubles of the world. Besides the objects of paramount interest to which I have already alluded, there are endless minor ones: the varied



scenery of the river-banks, the inhabitants, the bird and animal life, the navigation of the boat, even the uncertainties of the journey add to its zest. A fair wind may carry one fifty miles in a day, or there may be many days without any appreciable progress. There are most of the advantages of a long sea-voyage without the drawbacks mentioned in the first chapter. The sleeping-cabins are light and airy; the weather is almost always fine, so that nearly the whole day may be spent on deck, and the variety and exercise of a walk on shore can generally be had at some time or other in the twenty-four hours.

Of course, as in everything else in life, there are drawbacks even to the pleasures of a Nile voyage. It is possible that, notwithstanding the careful arrangements and precautions taken before starting, all may not be right with the boat or equipments, and, when once away from Cairo, there is no chance of remedying the defects. Then, especially to those who have near and dear relations at home, there is something trying in the isolation from them. This is, thanks to the improved Egyptian postal system, very different from what it was in former years. Regular post-offices are now established at all the principal towns along the Nile banks as far as Khartoum, to which letters will be forwarded from the central office at Cairo, according to the instructions given by the traveller, and from which they can be despatched with a considerable, if not absolute, certainty of their being delivered. Out of nearly a hundred letters which we posted to England last winter from many parts of Egypt, one only did not reach its destination; and, of all that were sent to us, I am not aware of any having been lost. There are also telegraph stations at every town of importance. This is a very great help; but still, owing to the impossibility of calculating beforehand to what place the boat will take one at any given date, considerable intervals must often elapse before news can be received. The absence of professional assistance in case of illness or accident, unless a medical man be one of the party, is another drawback often felt by invalids; though even this is gradually lessening, owing to the increasing numbers of the floating European population on the Nile during the season.

To persons of impatient disposition, to those not fond of reading or of quiet contemplation of the beauties of Nature, the Nile voyage in a dahabeah certainly may prove tedious. For such, and for others whose time and means are absolutely limited, there are the steamers, now under the direction of Messrs. Cook and Sons. Each vessel carries from fourteen to twenty passengers; and they run at uncertain intervals,

according to the season and the number of travellers, which can all be ascertained at the office close to Shepherd's Hotel. The time occupied in going to Assouan and back (for they do not ascend the cataract) is three weeks, and the charge £46 per head. All the principal objects of interest are visited, a certain number of hours being allowed for each temple or tomb. This is altogether a convenient method for those who wish to "do" the country expeditiously and economically, but not to be recommended either for travellers in search of health, or for those whose object is not to return able only to say that they have seen the country, but to feel that they have entered into its spirit, and impressed it so fully into their minds as to have made it part of themselves for the rest of their lives. The very delays of the sailing voyage have their advantages to the latter class of travellers, giving time for reading and reflecting upon what has been seen, and enabling them to see the country under a variety of different aspects, and to learn much as to the habits and social condition of the inhabitants, for which there are no opportunities in the hurried steamer voyage.

The life on board a dahabeah is generally a healthy one. It is essentially an out-of-door country life. The air, though perhaps not equal to that of the higher parts of the desert, is pure and bracing; for, owing to the narrowness of the strip of fertile land on the sides of the river (sometimes indeed quite absent, the rocks coming down to the water's edge), the air is practically that of the desert. On the first subsidence of the water after the autumnal overflow, the banks are muddy and damp, so it is well not to take to the water until December, by which time they are well dried by the sun, though January, February, and March are the best months. In April the water has often fallen so low, that navigation becomes difficult, owing to the numerous shoals and sandbanks. Even in autumn, malarious fever appears to be very uncommon on the Nile banks, except in the delta. The higher the river is ascended, so the salubrity increases, especially above the cataract, where the cultivated land is often reduced to a strip of a few feet in width along the water's edge, the river literally flowing through the desert.

The nights are generally clear, bright, and cool; sometimes, in the lower country, heavy mists are found to hang over the river in the early morning, which, however, are dissipated the moment the sun sends forth his genial rays. To guard against the cold of the night, a good supply of shawls and rugs must not be omitted, as no artificial heat can be obtained on board the boat, and persons subject to pulmonary



affections should always keep within the cabin after sundown. Warm clothing is essential on a Nile voyage, for even in the daytime the wind is often keen.

The dahabeahs are flat-bottomed boats with huge latteen sails, generally capable of accommodating from two to eight passengers, according to their size. Through the kindness of some excellent friends, our voyage last year was made in one of the largest and best fitted on the river, belonging to Mr. Broadway of Cairo. It was 105 feet in length, and 20 in breadth, and the mainsail was 150 feet in height. We were a party of eight—two ladies and six gentlemen—with two English servants. There were also on board the dragoman and his two Maltese servants, the cook (a Persian) and his assistant, and a crew, consisting of Arabs and Nubians, seventeen in number, including the riis or captain, and steersman—altogether thirty-two souls. The sailors were an active, pleasant, merry set of men. Though we were in close contact with them for more than three months, we had nothing to complain of in the conduct of any one of them. They were always respectful and obliging, and when we made excursions on shore, one or more would accompany us, ready to carry guns, shawls, etc., and always on the watch to assist the ladies over rough places, to hold umbrellas for sketchers, or to render any little service with a quick yet unobtrusive readiness, and with a gentleness and propriety of manner not often met with in men of their class in Europe. Though as strong and healthy men as could well be seen, their mode of living was most frugal. They slept in the open air on deck, and their food consisted chiefly of dry brown bread, crumbled into a large pan and boiled into a sort of porridge, with a few lentils added, and sometimes an onion or two. This was served out to them twice a day. On three occasions during the voyage, the head of our party presented them (as is the custom) with a sheep, but this was the only animal food they partook of during the whole time. Their drink was Nile water and an occasional small cup of strong coffee. Happily the riis and the majority of the crew were strict followers of the Prophet in the admirable regulation of abstaining from intoxicating liquors, and discipline or general opinion prevented those who were more lax in their religious observances from ever exceeding the bounds of propriety. It will be a bad time for the Arabs when this important article of the Mussulman faith ceases to be observed, but ominous-looking spirit-shops kept by Greeks are now to be

seen in all the towns along the river where dahabeahs are in the habit of stopping.

Our own living on board was entirely under the control, and dependant upon the care, of the dragoman, and his cook who, considering the exceedingly limited space in which his operations were conducted, and the materials at his disposal, turned out a wonderful variety of dishes. Fresh buffalo-milk was obtained almost every morning at the nearest village; eggs, fowls, turkeys, and sheep were always to be had, and often vegetables, such as spinach, lettuce, and onions; but, for everything else, we had to depend upon the stores laid in before starting, consisting of hams, tongues, preserved meat, vegetables, fruit, flour, and the other usual requirements of the kitchen. Good bread was made daily on board. I mention these things to show that no one need fear starvation on a Nile boat. Indeed, I could not help often contrasting the almost too abundantly supplied and varied table of the saloon, with the simple fare which appeared to fulfil all the requirements of health and strength to the crew. It may happen, however, with a dragoman not liberal or conscientious, with stores insufficient in quantity or quality, and an indifferent cook, that delicate or particular persons may come off badly on a Nile voyage; but this is now rather the exception than the rule.

The river affords an unfailing supply of excellent water for bathing, washing, and drinking. For the latter purpose, all the mud with which it is abundantly charged is completely separated by filtering through one of the native large porous earthen jars or *ballas*. Anything that may be required in the way of wine, or beer, or mineral waters, must be laid in before leaving Cairo, according to the requirements of the party, for they do not form part of the dragoman's contract. Those who are particular often send their stock of wine direct from England, and this is on the whole, perhaps, the most economical way when a large supply is needed, as everything of the kind is dear in Egypt.

Nile voyages almost always terminate either at Assouan, at the foot of the first cataract, the limit between Egypt and Nubia, or at Wady Halfeh, at the second cataract. The shorter voyage occupies about eight to ten weeks, the longer one, three or four weeks more. As dahabeahs cannot ascend the second cataract, it is not possible to continue the journey in the same boat beyond Wady Halfeh.

Contracts are made with the dragoman and owner of the boat for the journey. I must refer to Murray's Handbook for details as to the various methods in which these are drawn up, as much of the comfort

and pleasure of the voyage will depend upon having everything properly regulated beforehand. As in the case of almost every thing else, the expense of Nile travelling appears to be increasing at a rapid rate. This is partly owing to the superior accommodation now afforded, and the larger amount of comfort and luxuries that travellers appear to need. But there is no doubt that all the necessities of living have greatly increased in price during the last few years in Egypt. The time when fowls could be purchased for twopence apiece, and sheep for as many shillings, has long since passed away.

The present cost of the voyage will, of course, vary according to the style in which it is performed. The owners of very superior well-built, clean boats, used for no other purpose than to carry travellers, will naturally be able to ask more than need be paid for the rough old-fashioned kind, which had to be sunk in the river before starting to clear off the previous occupants, and in which English ladies would scarcely care to travel. Dragomans also vary much in their charges, and the number of the party joining to take a boat always has a very important influence upon the expense. The larger the number, the less will be the cost to each. Some persons prefer to travel alone, rather than run the risk of uncongenial companions. An English lady, last year, went up by herself in a dahabeah as far as the second cataract. Sometimes parties are made up at the hotels in Cairo. Supposing that four join in taking a boat, the entire expenses may be set down at somewhere about £2 per day for each. If the number be larger, they may be reduced to about £1 10s.; but, as I said before, these figures are subject to a considerable variation in either direction, according to circumstances, among which the bargaining powers of the manager of the party must be taken into account.

It will thus be seen that Egypt offers almost every advantage for a winter residence for invalids, except economy. The increased expense of late years has, doubtless, been partly occasioned by the great influx of travellers, English and American, to whom it is no object to limit expenditure, and who consequently raise the prices to all others, but also very much by the greatly increased taxation to which the native population is now subjected. The addition of over a hundred millions to the public debt, at a very high rate of interest, during the last ten years, is a heavy burden upon the resources of so small a country.

It would be very difficult to predict the future of Egypt. With such a heterogeneous population, especially among the classes who have any influence in the government of the country, it can hardly be looked

upon as a nation in the ordinary sense of the word. The sovereignty of Turkey is in some respects still more than nominal and very costly, as, besides the regular tribute, vast sums are said to be expended in bribes to the ministers at Constantinople to enable the Khedive to carry out his independent views.

With a population in which nearly all the intelligence and education is of foreign origin, self-government or any kind of representative institution is impossible. Moreover, the religion of the masses of the people, Mahommedanism, has no room for improvement. Its precepts are inflexible. As all knowledge needful for man is contained in the Koran, all other books are superfluous. Unfortunately, the greatest obstacle to progress, polygamy and the consequent degraded state of the women, is associated with the whole system of social and religious life. What can be expected of children who are brought up in a hareem by women and slaves, scarcely raised by any kind of cultivation above the level of animals? This naturally tells far more upon the higher than upon the lower classes. Among the latter, a man can rarely afford more than one wife, and she has to take her part in home and out-door work, and so lives more on an equality with the other sex. But the more a man rises in education, intelligence, and wealth, the greater the intellectual difference between himself and his female companions. Hence, as compared with other countries, the upper classes are relatively worse in many respects than the lower. Unless all this can be changed, Egypt can never take rank as a civilised country. The present ruler appears to see this, and the education of women is one among his numerous schemes for reform. He has set the example among his own daughters, and is building "ladies' colleges" both at Cairo and at Constantinople. But, to alter the entire social system which has existed for ages, will be a task that can hardly be accomplished in a generation. There is much that is excellent in the moral code of Mahommedanism; among others, it has this great merit, that, on many points, it causes its devotees to sacrifice *self*, and to submit to inconveniences and privations for conscience's sake. It is perfectly certain, however, that, as long as a people remain fanatical adherents to its creed, they can never become civilised in our sense of the word. But unfortunately, when inroads are made upon the faith of a Mahomedan, unless a pure form of Christianity can be substituted, good and bad go together, and the last state of the man is often worse than the first. The very grave question as to the future destiny of Mahomedan populations may be quietly relegated to the future in many more

out-of-the-way parts of the world, but it is seething to the surface in Egypt just now. In this age of motion, its geographical position at the meeting-point of three great continents, as well as its other attractions to travellers and speculators, have suddenly brought it into importance and close contact with the most advanced portions of mankind. Its present ruler, moreover, is a type of the general condition of the country ; like his grandfather, Mahommed Ali, he has much ambition, energy, administrative capacity, and a general desire for the progress and material prosperity of his country, engrafted upon a substratum of Oriental ignorance, credulity, caprice, and self-indulgent extravagance. What his successor may be cannot yet be predicted ; and a country is in a fearfully precarious condition when everything depends upon the personal character of the man who happens to be at the head of affairs for the time being.

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